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17 January 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: Special Assistant to the Under Secretary
for Political Affairs (M)

SUBJECT: Joint Planning Committee - Cuba

As agreed at the 10 January meeting of the Joint Planning Committee, I am sending you some comments on the Staff Study presented by DOD at the meeting, on the working draft of the memorandum, dated January 10, submitted by Ambassador Willauer and on certain other related matters. I am addressing my memorandum to you as I felt that a number of Special Group matters were involved and that, consequently, you should be the focal point. I am, however, including a copy for Ambassador Willauer and an extra copy in case you might need it. I am also returning Ambassador Willauer's working draft.

A. DOD Staff Study

1. As indicated at the 10 January meeting, it is our opinion that the DOD draft paper, entitled "Evaluation of Possible Military Courses of Action in Cuba" is a useful document. I would like to point out, however, that there are a number of points which concern us about the paper unless, as agreed at the meeting, the premise on which the paper is written is strictly applied. This premise, as you know, has a number of alternatives which stated in my own language are; a) the present FRD strike force lands and is thoroughly defeated; b) attempts to land but utterly fails; or, c) prior to any landing attempt, a judgment is reached as to the extent of the opposition which results in a decision not to use the strike force at all. Any of these alternatives assume a sufficiently strong pro-Castro political situation within Cuba to make the DOD paper acceptable to us. Should there alternatives, however, not be basic to the paper, there are some points which in our opinion raise inferences with which we cannot agree. For example:

(a) It is quite clear that the entire DOD plan is written without any reference whatsoever to planning which has taken place to date in connection with the FRD and its strike force. As indicated, this is acceptable on a strict application of the premise but I want to make it clear that we cannot agree to any inference that the planning to date is not and has not been valid.

(b) The DOD stated orally in connection with paragraph 15 of its paper that any force of less than 5,000 men would be foolish to consider. We do not accept any inference that this applies to present planning based

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as it is on different premises.

(c) Paragraph 17 concludes that only courses of action involving the overt use of U.S. forces can be successful. Again, we cannot accept any suggestion that such a conclusion applies to present planning.

2. Additional points could be made but do not seem necessary since we do not believe that there was any misunderstanding at the 10 January meeting. This conclusion is, in our opinion, established by General Gray's agreement that there is still a further area of planning which was not been covered, i.e. a plan now exists culminating in the use of the FRD strike force and the DOD paper presents a plan based on the complete elimination of failure to use this strike force. As yet unplanned are the possibilities that the strike force may be sufficiently successful to achieve a landing and establish itself on a piece of Cuban soil but it is unable without help to either advance any further or to hold its position beyond a given period of time. Joint planning between CIA and DOD is necessary in order to consider what can be done to cover these possibilities. In our opinion, these possibilities are not really practical ones and, therefore, the ones on which particular emphasis should be placed. As indicated, CIA proposes to proceed on these with DOD as suggested by General Gray.

3. A further possibility exists; namely, the landing or attempted landing of a strike force which fails. It is not felt that this possibility should be considered since there has been complete agreement by everyone from the start that no action should be undertaken unless it were quite clear that all steps necessary for success would be employed if required.

4. Although, perhaps, obvious, it is still important to point out that the planning discussed above is strictly limited to military or paramilitary problems and completely leaves out many intimately related issues of a political nature for which planning is essential and on which to date no decisions have been made. In this connection it might be said that although it is recognized that decisions may have to await the new administration, still there are not even firm recommendations available on many of these issues. Agreed recommendations, for example, are not presently available on urgent matters directly connected with the FRD strike plan, on many political aspects of the FRD plan and on the implications on certain possible courses of action vital to other planning. Examples are whether or not U.S. air bases can be used; how far the U.S. should go in recognition of a provisional government; what specific action will be taken to discuss with and discover attitudes of selected Latin American countries; and what the implications of recognition of a provisional government might be in terms of actual support of a strike force.

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B. Ambassador Willauer's Draft Paper

Regarding Ambassador Willauer's draft paper, our opinion is that it states matters with which we are generally in agreement. On the other hand, we believe that it would be better to focus the attention of the Special Group to a few specific issues rather than to open at this time a number of problems which could lead the Group away from the main matters of concern. This seems particularly important since it is the Group's last meeting and the members, therefore, can only be expected to pass on a few items which preferably should be of an extremely precise nature. Perhaps Ambassador Willauer could submit his draft memorandum separately in which case we would be glad to submit our comments in detail, if desired. As far as the Group is concerned, it seems to us that we should concentrate on reporting to them the planning which has taken place since the last meeting, what additional planning must occur and our proposals on how this should be accomplished. The uncompleted planning should include both joint planning and any other planning required by each Department involved, i.e., State, DOD and CIA.

C. Tracy Barnes
C. TRACY BARNES

cc: Ambassador Willauer

Attachment: Amb. Willauer's Working Draft
Memo, dated 16 January 1961

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